



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

MONTANA WOLF PROGRAM WEEKLY REPORT

To: Interested Parties

From: FWP Wolf Program Coordinator, Carolyn Sime (406-461-0587)

Subject: Wolf Program Activities and Related Information, May 23 – May 29 2009

Contributors to the Montana Wolf Weekly are Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Universities, USDA Wildlife Services (WS), the National Park Service (NPS; Glacier NP; Yellowstone National Park will be reported in the Wyoming Wolf Weekly), US Forest Service, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Blackfeet Nation.

Highlighted activities relate to: monitoring, wolf – livestock interactions, outreach and education, research, law enforcement, and other miscellaneous topics of public interest. The Weekly Report will be available on each Monday, covering the previous week. It and other wolf program information (including the 2008 annual report) can be found at: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

Wolf Monitoring Activities

The field season is in full swing and FWP wolf staff and volunteers out scouting and trapping.

FWP encourages hunters, landowners, and other outdoor enthusiasts to report wolves through the online reporting button or to send in one of the pre-printed postcards available at all FWP offices, many US Forest Service offices, and license providers throughout the state. Information provided by the public helps FWP more accurately monitor wolf numbers and distribution in Montana.

Flights: Bradley flew in western Montana on 5/26. Asher flew in southwest Montana East Half (Paradise Valley and east) on 5/27. Sime flew in southwest Montana (Big Hole) on 5/27 and north of Helena / the East Front on 5/28.

Wolf - Livestock Activities

On 5/29, WS investigated a report of a sheep killed by wolves near Divide. It was unconfirmed as a wolf kill. WS confirmed the kill as a being caused by a coyote.

During a flight on 5/27, the Miner Lakes breeding female was located in the same local area as the previous week, suggesting the pack is also still in the local area and pups are surviving.

WS investigated a dead calf in the Lennup area (north end of the Crazy Mountains). Cause of death could not be determined and so was unconfirmed as being wolf related.

Outreach and Education Activities

On 5/29, FWP Director Maurier and other FWP staff from Wildlife and the Legal Unit attended a meeting of an Interim Legislative Committee (Environmental Quality Council), which has statutory oversight of FWP. Staff provided updates and answered questions about the wolf delisting, upcoming litigation, and other aspects of the wolf program. About 25 people attended.

Ross and Lance participated during the FWP Animal Capture and Handling Training Workshop this week -- Ross as an instructor and Lance as refresher training. Both shared information about wolf capture procedures, behavior, and protocols with other participants.

Research Activities

Nothing to report.

Law Enforcement and Related Activities

Nothing to report.

Other

The FWP Wolf Program is recruiting to fill a seasonal field conservation technician position. The job is based in Missoula and will be filled on or not long after July 1. Application materials include a state application, supplemental questions, and reference checks. The closing date is June 15, 2009. Apply online, see: <http://fwp.mt.gov/doingBusiness/employment/currentOpenings.aspx>

NEW -- Delisting Update:

On May 4, gray wolves in Montana were delisted. Conservation and management are guided by Montana laws, administrative rules (ARM 12.9.1301 – 12.9.1305), and the state's federally-approved plan. Wolves in Montana were automatically reclassified to a "species in need of management" statewide on May 4. The gray wolf is protected statewide, though individual wolves may be hazed, harassed, or killed if seen actively attacking, killing, or threatening to kill livestock. Incidents must be reported and each will be investigated. Wolves may also be killed to protect human life. See the FWP wolf web page for a Fact Sheet and answers to frequently asked questions about delisting. The FWP wolf web page also has information about state law and regulations and what livestock owners can do to protect livestock. See: <http://fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf/default.html>.

Montana 2009 Wolf Hunting Season: FWP and the FWP Commission continue efforts to develop and prepare for a potential 2009 season. The season structure previously adopted by the FWP Commission is still in place for a potential fall 2009 season. But FWP and the FWP Commission must still establish a quota (the total number of wolves that could be taken by hunters) for 2009. FWP and the Commission still intend to proceed cautiously and conservatively.

At the FWP Commission meeting on 5/14, FWP proposed a range of statewide and individual Wolf Management Unit tentative quotas for Commission consideration and public comment. FWP proposed a range of no hunting (quota of zero) to 207 total wolves and a North Fork Flathead Subunit subquota of 2 wolves. All options presented are predicted to maintain or increase the wolf population of about 500 wolves (the 2008 estimate) and would not risk a population decline to fewer than 15 breeding pairs statewide based on a harvest simulation modeling exercise and Montana wolf population data from 2007/2008. Other conservation considerations incorporated into the proposal and the season structure previously adopted by the commission, harvest reporting requirements, and "safety net" mechanisms to assure that implementation of a conservative hunting season would not jeopardize the population were also discussed.

The FWP Commission discussed the proposal and affirmed their commitment to implement fair chase hunting as a wildlife management tool for wolves in a professional manner. The Commission also affirmed their commitment to maintain a healthy recovered wolf population. The public was also provided an opportunity to comment. After public comment, the Commission approved a range of statewide and individual Wolf Management Unit quotas of 26, 75, and 165 for further public comment.

Public comment will be accepted through 5pm June 19. FWP expects to make a final quota recommendation for FWP Commission consideration and final action on July 9. To comment electronically, follow this link: <http://fwp.mt.gov/hunting/default.html>. Scroll down under Public Comment for the "Proposed 2009 Wolf Quotas and Subquota" bullet and click on the link – then scroll down the Interested Person's letter for the wolf section and link at the bottom of the letter.

Written comment will also be accepted via postal mail and must be received by 5pm June 19: Drop comments off in person or mail to: FWP, Wildlife Division, Wolf Quota Comments, PO Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620. Written letters can be submitted in their original format electronically at the link above.

Background: Previously, the Commission adopted a regulatory framework and season structure for public harvest (e.g. management units, season dates, and other general regulations) of wolves in February 2008. For a potential fall 2008 season, FWP proposed a conservative quota of 75 wolves that was predicted to maintain or increase the population compared to 2007 levels. The federal court injunction precluded consideration or adoption of a final quota and a 2008 hunting season.

Montana Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board:

Nothing to report. The program coordinator can be reached at 444-5609.

=====

To learn more about Montana's wolf population, the Montana program and to help FWP monitor wolves by reporting wolf sign, visit FWP at: www.fwp.mt.gov/wildthings/wolf.
To anonymously report a dead or injured wolf or suspected illegal activity, call: 1-800-TIP-MONT.

To request an investigation of injured or dead livestock, call USDA Wildlife Services directly in western Montana / Helena area at 458-0106 or in eastern Montana at the statewide office: 657-6464. Or, call your nearest FWP representative to have your call referred to Wildlife Services.

If you have a confirmed or probable livestock loss due to wolves, USDA Wildlife Services will supply you with a copy of the Loss Reimbursement Application form. For more information, see <http://liv.mt.gov/liv/LM/index.asp>. Or, contact the Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Program Coordinator George Edwards at the Montana Department of Livestock at 444-5609.